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The Fall of Fearing

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Abstract

The purpose of this project was to seamlessly combine art for entertainment purposes and art for self-indulgence in order to express a relatable story. I combined my conflicting influences from writer Elizabeth Cady Stanton and choreographer Bob Fosse to explore the feminism that can be seen through the female dancing body on stage. I did this by showcasing both the physical and emotional ability of each female through the subtleties and strengths in her dancing. By interviewing the twelve dancers about the works of Stanton and Fosse, I was able to create a twenty minute dance concert. I learned that, though women are objectified through jazz dance, the use of athleticism as well as expressionism can aid in the deconstruction of the woman's body being seen as an object. Even though they were once seen as mutually exclusive, art for entertainment and art for indulgence can work together in order to reach a common goal set forth by the artist.

“...they must make the voyage of life alone.”- Elizabeth Cady Stanton

(*The Solitude of Self* 1)

Preface

I created *The Fall of Fearing*, a contemporary jazz dance piece for my Bachelor of Fine Arts graduate concert. During the year long process I cast, arranged, designed and directed this piece in preparation for its final performance. It was presented March 16-18, 2012 at the University of Colorado Charlotte Irey Theater. This paper is an exploration of my influences as well as an examination of my process concluding with a post-show analysis of my piece.

The Solitude of Self - Elizabeth Cady Stanton

The idea behind *The Fall of Fearing* came when I was reading *The Solitude of Self* by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, a nineteenth century feminist writer. I immediately connected to the speech because I have always enjoyed being by myself and felt that it gave me independence instead of isolating me, which was Stanton's argument in her speech. She wanted women to have equal opportunities and rights to men because there are many times where all human souls are in solitude and must know how to fend for themselves. In her words, “...they must make the voyage of life alone” (Stanton 1). I definitely agreed with her, but there was a side to me that disagreed. I was thinking about all of the people in my life who have influenced me and made me who I am today and realized, though I've been a loner most of my life, I would not survive if I did not have other human souls around me. Because I had mixed feelings and arguments about this speech, I had a desire to explore it further.

I understood where Stanton was coming from. During the time period she grew up in, women in America were not given equal opportunities, let alone equal rights to men. Men were

able have schooling and an education to then go out and obtain a job. Women were not given the same quantity or quality of schooling because they were to marry a man and then take care of the house and kids. Stanton was arguing that there are multiple times in a human life that we must be on our own. If a woman was not given the same opportunity to be an educated person, how was she supposed to take care of herself when those situations arise? I completely agreed with her; I think an important part to being a valuable human in our society is the ability to think for yourself. It is important to listen to what others are saying and then become educated in order to understand and articulate your own opinions. At the same time, I felt as though some of Stanton's arguments dated her speech a bit. Since women are now given equal opportunities to men, (though lingering double standards do exist) using the idea of solitude to gain rights was not quite suiting for today's society. I also believed that times of solitude are just as important as times of community. Stanton, rightfully so, only focuses on the importance of solitude but I think that the presence of other human souls in our lives is crucial for the individual soul to survive and thrive. Personally, I would not be the same person if it was not for other souls who have stepped into my life. This debate going on in my head is one that I wanted to continue and also collect other people's opinions on as well.

During the time I was reading Stanton's speech, my History and Philosophy of Dance class happened to be studying *Lamentation* by Martha Graham, a piece about the solitary physicalization of grief. Stanton also covers the topic of having to mourn in solitude in her speech:

No one can share her fears, no one mitigate her pangs; and if her sorrow is greater than she can bear, alone she passes beyond the gates into the vast unknown. We may have many friends, love, kindness, sympathy and charity to smooth our pathway in everyday

life, but in the tragedies and triumphs of human experience each moral stands alone.

(Stanton 4)

As I started to make this connection between the language and movement of a feminist writer and arguably feminist choreographer, I realized I could connect my mixed feelings of the necessity of solitude versus the necessity of community in the speech to my passion to dance. This is where the piece began conceptually and I realized in order to make this piece, I was going to need a large, female cast.

I decided that I needed to include a large number of women because I wanted their opinions. I wanted to know their feelings about the speech; did they agree or disagree? Did they prefer to be alone or among a group? Did they use either one to hide from something? I had my own opinions but I wanted to hear what other strong women had to say about Stanton's claims, particularly when she speaks to all ages and situations:

We ask no sympathy from others in the anxiety and agony of a broken friendship or shattered love. When death sunders our nearest ties, alone we sit in the shadows of our affliction. Alike mid the greatest triumphs and darkest tragedies of life we walk alone. On the divine heights of human attainments, eulogized and worshiped as a hero or saint, we stand alone. In ignorance, poverty, and vice, as a pauper or criminal, alone we starve or steal; alone we suffer the sneers and rebuffs of our fellows; alone we are hunted and hounded thro dark courts and alleys, in by-ways and highways; alone we stand in the judgment seat; alone in the prison cell we lament our crimes and misfortunes; alone we expiate them on the gallows. In hours like these we realize the awful solitude of individual life, its pains, its penalties, its responsibilities; hours in which the youngest and

most helpless are thrown on their own resources for guidance and consolation. (Stanton 2)

I wanted to show this individuality because it was the most positive argument from her speech. Overall, Stanton's speech was negative in tone, as she was trying to play on the sympathy of the U.S. Congress by pointing out the negative ramifications of gender inequality. Despite this negative content, Stanton was still fighting for the positive. She wanted everyone to be able to have equal rights for themselves and also for the greater good of society. She argued that humans, as much as we do not like to admit it, simply follow nature: "nature never repeats herself, and the possibilities of one human soul will never be found in another. No one has ever found two blades of ribbon grass alike, and no one will ever find two human beings alike" (Stanton 1). She wanted everyone to have equal opportunities so that they could be the best version of themselves that they could be. I too think that we as humans get caught up in how society tells us to act instead of being who we are meant to be. Everyone is beautiful the way they are and I wanted to showcase this acceptance of the individual from the speech in my concert.

I saw the more emotional side of Stanton's arguments but I could see that she had a factual side as well. I realized this when I found a quote from singer-songwriter Leslie Feist:

I feel like I'm on this solitary lifelong path. No matter who weaves in and out of your life, regardless of the quality of those deep friendships and familyships, I'm the only common denominator at this point who's been with me the whole time. And there's this sense of trying to make sense of that ultimate solitude. It's not a negative or even a positive. It's just a fact. (Pareles)

This quote helped me make more sense out of my personal mixed arguments. I have had some really strong friend and family relationships in my life, but I have never shared every thought I have ever had with one person – nobody has. We think a million thoughts every day that we only share with ourselves. In Stanton’s words, “There is something of every passion in every situation we conceal; even so in our triumphs and our defeats” (Stanton 2). Just because we do not share every single thing about ourselves to one person does not mean that we are hiding. But I believe that most people purposefully hide pieces of who they are because they are afraid to be vulnerable, and I was going to find out if that was true.

Broadway and Feminism

Ever since I started to imagine my BFA concert, I envisioned a grandioso show. I wanted props, lights and costumes; most of this vision came from my background in jazz dance. Though I had moved past that background and learned to appreciate what every style of dance has to offer, I still did not want to deny my roots. Through my research and experience, I found that the history of jazz dance does not have the greatest track record with empowering the individual woman like the writings and work of Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Martha Graham. In fact, most of the time it did quite the opposite, objectifying women for the entertainment of men. The following illustrates how the influence that jazz dance (coming from Broadway shows) and its relation to feminism affected the idea for my concert.

Females on Broadway

In her article, “‘Broken Dolls’: Representations of Dancing Women in the Broadway Musical,” Liz Gennaro states that “from its earliest beginnings, the musical theatre has been a site of sexual titillation in the form of the female dancing body” (Gennaro 1). She continues:

In the 1920s, with her bare legs and wholesome grin, the professional chorus girl became a symbol of health, vigour, female independence and unencumbered sex, and Broadway became a prime purveyor of a patriarchal invention of female sexuality, employing hundreds of chorus girls annually in a collection of sleek modern revue productions. (1)

This is to say that the symbol of a healthy and independent woman in the 1920's was the scantily clad girl dancing seductively on stage for the man's money. Essentially, as Gennaro is explaining, women would not have had a career or their sexuality if it was not for men. This was what the beginnings of modern day jazz dance became known for:

Dance in popular entertainments like burlesque, vaudeville, and cabarets had historically often depended on commodifying women's bodies. (Banes 124)

The style of dance that was performed in these venues was for the solitary purpose of entertaining. Everyone knows that sex sells, so naturally, because of our patriarchal society, the marketing fell onto the woman's body.

Due to the fact that men were defining what a woman's sexuality should be, men's own definition of sexuality was changing. While Broadway was in the midst of solidifying the woman's role on stage in the 1960's, Hugh Hefner was coming out with *Playboy* magazine. This encouraged men in society to avoid marriage and "enjoy the pleasures the female has to offer without becoming emotionally involved" (Gennaro 4). Societally, this transformed attitudes towards sex for men and women.

Feminism on Broadway

Around the same time that Hefner was changing the way men felt about casual sex, Helen Gurley Brown, former editor-in-chief of *Cosmopolitan* magazine, was doing the same for women. In her bestseller book in 1962, *Sex and the Single Girl*, she told women to “enjoy multiple sex partners, to pursue a career, and to use sex as the ‘powerful weapon’ it was” (Gennaro 4). She was one of the first women to come out publicly and define her own sexuality. This was a huge step on the path to female empowerment through Brown’s displayed sexuality

Though the female dancing body on the Broadway stage was still considered a commodity, Agnes de Mille attempted to redefine the role of dancing in musicals in order to give the performers more than just their body to sell:

In 1943 with her dances for Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Oklahoma!*, Agnes de Mille re-invented the function of dance and the chorus girl on the Broadway stage by engaging in a decidedly female-centric agenda and employing dance as a narrative tool capable of enriching librettos. Her dream ballet, ‘Laurey Makes up Her Mind’ explored the suppressed sexual desires of the play’s heroine, Laurey, and featured the ‘Postcard Girls’, garishly dressed saloon dancers. The ballet changed the function of dance in the musical theater and introduced a new breed of chorus girl, the dancer-actor, to the Broadway stage. (Gennaro 1)

This was an imperative shift, not only in the role that women played, but in the entire structure of the Broadway musical. In fact, the dancing became so important to the musical that in the 1957 previews of *New Girl in Town* the audience was so upset that Gwen Verdon never broke into a show stopping dance number that Bob Fosse and George Abbot had to add more, even though the dance scenes did not make sense to the story line (Long 153).

In her book, *Dancing Women: Female Bodies on Stage*, Sally Banes expresses a correlation between the dark sexuality expressed on the American Broadway stage and in modern dance in Germany. She explains how *Witch Dance* by Mary Wigman and “Big Spender” by Bob Fosse can be considered a “reclamation of the witch as a positive resistant female identity – that of a deliberately ‘bad woman’, a social rebel and unregenerate outcast” (Banes 133). This portrayal of the “bad woman” as a witch, or in Fosse’s case, a prostitute, added another element onto the female sexuality. It somehow gave women power by turning them into working women with an agenda. Banes also brings up an interesting triad of femininity labeled by Martha Graham. Graham claims that the competition between females is created because of the three types of femininity inside every woman, “the virgin, the temptress/prostitute and the mother” (Banes 165). Up until this point in history, women were expected to be virgins and then eventually mothers. The public display of a woman as a temptress or prostitute was unheard of and frowned upon. Though Fosse and Wigman attempted to demonstrate how powerful female sexuality could be, neither Fosse’s nor Wigman’s works were very well received by audiences. Fosse especially had to be very subtle about showing a woman as a prostitute in his musicals. *New Girl in Town* was actually shut down temporarily by New Haven police because the titled “Red Light Ballet” was too provocative and “glamorized the bordello” (Gennaro 4).

I wanted to take the glitz and glam from the Broadway Jazz world and combine it with the idea of solitude and community in humanity. These two ideas also brought up the opposite sides of my thoughts about feminism. Part of me was not bothered by learning about the chorus girl dancing seductively on stage because that was similar to the dance world I grew up in. The other part of me was horrified that I could not see the self objectification that comes from that world. Starting with these two juxtaposing ideas was very frustrating. I sought to use both of

them but I did not know how I could fuse them together. The more I researched, I found that I could use the juxtaposition to create an interesting commentary about how we see the female body on stage. What if the female is both objectified and empowered in the same piece of work? Is it possible to move away from an initial objectification? To shift the viewer's perspective of what they are witnessing? I believe that it was possible to do this given that I have seen this shift in my life as a dancer. My perspective of the female dancing body on stage has changed radically since I came to college and I wished to show that in my concert.

Bob Fosse

Portrayal of women

Bob Fosse is famous for being a choreographer and director in show business but he is also known for having an obsession with sex and for being a womanizer in his personal life. Robert Long, in his book *Broadway: The Golden Years* says of a young Fosse, "He led a double life. If during the day he was a model high school student, at night until the small hours of the morning, he performed in cheap dives – a lewd existence he concealed from those he knew at school. It was an existence involving him prematurely in a nightworld of sex" (146). Growing up performing amongst strippers at night clubs began his obsession with women and sex.

His personal feelings about women also translated to the stage. Fosse would often objectify women through camera angles in his movies, showing a dance scene through women's legs or over their shoulders. He would draw attention to their bodies by having them perform most numbers with no facial expressions (Gennaro 4). In her book *Bob Fosse's Broadway* Margery Beddow, a former dancer for Bob Fosse, explains the relationship between body and face in the number "Big Spender" from the musical *Sweet Charity*:

When we arrived downstage, we suddenly turned toward the audience, and hanging onto or leaning over the railing, each of us fell into a different dead-eyed but seductive pose. [Paul] Glover [assistant to Fosse on *Sweet Charity*] told us that Fosse wanted absolutely no expression on our faces; we were moving in a very hot, sensuous way, but our faces were completely cold. (44)

In “Big Spender” he wanted to show that these are working women who have had a long day, not necessarily on their feet, but they have still been working hard. Fosse allowed them to let their bodies speak instead of their faces in order to keep a bit of mystery as to what these women were actually doing all day. Liz Gennaro describes the feeling she got from watching “Big Spender” while not being able to directly pinpoint what was going on:

There is a quality of decadence about [the women], however if it is decadence in relation to the morally corrupt world of the sex trade; decadence in relation to Fosse’s self-indulgence in objectifying the female body; or the decadence of irony, that the chorus girl is in fact dancing for pay, albeit from the safe distance of the stage, is unclear. (5)

Despite the changing societal attitudes towards sex, prostitution was still taboo, so to create an entire musical about these “working women” was a huge risk. But Fosse was able to do it because of his subtlety in the story line and portrayal of the women.

Bob Fosse’s portrayal of women had an influence on my concert because I started to think for myself and realized that I was, and currently am, saddened by the fact that a woman cannot be appreciated for her body and for her mind. This is true in the jazz dance world and in society as well. I wanted to explore if it was possible for a woman to move away from the

objectification of her parts, while showing the capabilities of her body and aspects of her femininity at the same time.

Choreographic process

As I continued to research Bob Fosse, I became very interested in his choreographic process and how he related to his dancers. I found that he actually respected his dancers and cared for them enough to want the best out of them. Being on the inside, Margery Beddow explains that “One of the reasons Fosse was able to get such wonderful performances out of people was because he would take the time to talk to them about how to develop into the best they could be. He made them feel he really wanted them to be great” (65). I discovered through research and my own past rehearsal experiences that if the dancers believe that the choreographer is there for them to look good and to be the best they can be, then they will do almost anything that is asked of them because there is a mutual respect. Despite his reputation, Fosse had this respect and it can be seen in this advice he gave to dancer Ann Reinking:

Rehearse yourself more than you think you need to. Do your research. Be able to say no to yourself when it’s still not good enough. Sit alone in the dark for five minutes and subjectively visualize the entire number. Do the very best you can. Then if it doesn’t work, you can still go on, and you can learn from it. (Beddow, 65)

Some choreographers become very upset when their dancer does not perform up to the choreographer’s standards. Fosse, on the other hand, wanted his dancers to be the best they personally could be so if a performance did not go well, he looked at it as a learning experience. As a young, inexperienced choreographer with a young cast, I was nervous about how the rehearsal process would play out, but I found that it went quite smoothly. I tried to take

everything I had learned in my past rehearsal experiences to create a level of collaboration but also respect amongst the dancers. Beddow says the same of Fosse:

Dancers always appreciate a creative choreographer who has really done his homework, and Fosse's fervor and intensity made his performers eager to get started. And so they went to work. Fosse made you feel as if you were really helping him out, and he was very generous about allowing performers to interject their own ideas. He wanted you to know he respected your opinion, even though he always made the final decision. (3)

As I said earlier, I chose to cast a large number of dancers because I wanted more opinions. I wanted to hear their feelings and stories in order to develop the piece and eventually make it relatable to everyone who sees it.

Fosse was very subtle about how he would coach and put choreography on his dancers. One of his dancers, Elaine Cancilla, tells Beddow about the parties they would have when they toured with Fosse. She explained that they would all just dance at these parties and Fosse would watch carefully to see how the dancers expressed themselves physically. "It was like he'd get inside your head to see how you felt when you were dancing, and then he would add his own steps to it. As each dancer did his or her own crazy thing, Fosse shaped, edited, and molded the routine until it was perfect for the moment in the piece" (Beddow 29). Similarly, my process began with several improvisations where I was able to see how the dancers wanted to move and who they wanted to move with.

Kevin Grubb explains a little more about Fosse's tactics in his book *Razzle Dazzle: The Life and Work of Bob Fosse*:

Many people remarked on Fosse's cunning ability to *accidentally* coax them into giving raw, realistic performances. And though some believed that the methods he used to trick them into developing their characters were flagrantly manipulative and often cruel, they also claimed it forced them to look deeper into themselves, examine their motivations, become someone else by using their own resources. (xx)

I don't believe in being cruel to dancers but I do believe that certain pieces require more than just showing up, putting a smile on, and kicking your leg to your face. Fosse was able to "trick" his dancers because they already had a mutual trust and were willing to do anything for him. Especially for the intentions of my piece, I wanted to see each dancer's soul when she moved. I needed to showcase the human on stage in order to convey the message I wanted. I had to come up with some tricks of my own in order to get everyone on the same page so that everyone felt safe and open.

In order for the audience to understand and relate to the dancers, I needed the dancers to be human souls as well. Dance is sometimes put on this elitist pedestal that only the "in-crowd" can understand. If an audience member could not relate to the technique of the movement a dancer was doing, I wanted them to be able to relate to the human being that was standing in front of them. It was not enough for me to have my dancers put on a sad face because the mood was sad; the dancers needed to understand the reasons why they were feeling whatever it was that they were feeling in order to be relatable. I was able to open everybody up by simply having them dance with each other on the very first rehearsal. I guided them in an improvisation and before they knew what was happening, they were relating to each other in a very organic way. I find that dancers, speaking from personal experience, are not the best with articulating through words. Opening up to each other through dance came so naturally to them even if some of them

spoke differently in their journals. This initial community building led the dancers to have a safe space to work through their thoughts and emotions about solitude. Had they not had that initial moment to gain trust, I do not think they would have had the same deep understanding of their intentions as they did.

Despite this depth of character we were exploring in rehearsals, I still wanted to have a good time. I feel that dancers take themselves way too seriously sometimes and to someone like me, who does not like the rehearsal process to begin with, it can make rehearsing that much more tedious. Bob Fosse was known for his great sense of humor and researching him more inspired me to have a lighter spirit when I was rehearsing with my dancers. In an interview with Fosse, Grubb asked him about what he looks for in an auditioning dancer:

I try not to look at the faces in the beginning [He is looking for strong ballet technique].

As we near the end [of auditions], I start looking more towards personality. Also, [I demand] a sense of humor. Rehearsals are so long and tedious and difficult. I find that if there's a sense of humor involved, a person can get over some bumpy times. [I like] people who aren't afraid to roll on the floor and make fools out of themselves. (xxiii)

Finding the lighter side made rehearsals easy and the friendships we made ended up being showcased in the final performance.

Show Business

If you have ever seen a musical by Bob Fosse, you have seen a glimpse into how he felt about show business. It seemed as though he loved it simply because that was all he knew, but in actuality he felt that there was a huge sense of deception and self-delusion. He began to realize how he could control an audience's reaction. He showed this by having an audience with

impassive faces and a puppet amongst them in *Cabaret* the movie: “Fosse seems to be saying that the mindless members of the cabaret audience are like the puppet being manipulated by outer, controlling forces” (Long 164). While he was learning how to control what the audience sees, he was being manipulated at the same time: “He admitted making compromises along the way to appease ‘the money men,’ and regretting it later” (Grubb xxvi). Show business is exactly that, a business. As much as we as artists want to show our work and our art, it ultimately comes down to what the so-called “money men” want. Bob Fosse was a strong spirit who knew what he wanted, but despite that he still had to make compromises along the way. I took this as advice to be passionate about what I am doing and to create what I want while I do not have the “money men” telling me what to do.

I found myself relating to my background in jazz dance the same way Fosse related to show business. I loved everything about the competition jazz world, simply because it was all I had known. I realized that along with deception and self-delusion, there also a sense of shallowness involved. In the same way that Fosse felt that he had to sell out in order to appease the producers, a competition dancer has to sell out, in a sense, to the judges. It was an interesting experience when I had to look at everything I had ever done as a dancer and determine what had been for me, and what had been to appease someone else. In a broader sense, this is a very human experience. If we had to think of every action we had done in our lives and determine if each one was something we wanted to do to or something someone else wanted us to do, I think we would be surprised at how many times we “sold out”. This goes back to my, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s, original argument of being able to think for yourself. The community voice surrounding a person is not necessarily bad, but they must determine their own opinions instead of mindlessly listening to the collective group. As I related this concept of individuality versus

the outside community to my jazz background, I started to realize my juxtaposed topics may be more connected than I originally thought.

Bob Fosse also felt pressure from himself in show business. All artists at one point or another consider themselves either as their own biggest fans or their own biggest critics. I have definitely been on both sides of this spectrum and neither has proven very beneficial. After getting a bad review on his last musical, Fosse decided to go back and watch it: “I went back to see it [*Big Deal*] with this fear that I was going to see something that was bad that I thought was good...If you care about your work, you’re always concerned that maybe you are deluding yourself, because there’s a tremendous amount of self-delusion in show business” (Grubb xxviii). From my experience, this is very common among dancers. They become very passionate and elitist about what they are doing and do not understand how someone could not like it. This business is a hard one to master because it is not always based in reality. Fosse seemed to believe the same thing; he showed his true suffering in the semi-autobiographical movie, *All That Jazz*. In a scene from the movie, “The jive-talking Flood sums [Fosse’s character] up as he introduces him for his final appearance: ‘This cat allowed himself to be adored but not loved...And he came to believe that work, show business, love, his whole life, even himself and all that jazz was bullshit...Like, to this cat, the only reality is death’” (Long 175).

Modern Dance and Improvisation

I wanted to incorporate my modern training in my concert to add depth and the human element back into the seemingly shallow jazz dance. I had done movement meditation improvisation before and it really allowed me to sort out my feelings on a certain topic. I wanted to do this with my dancers to truly get to the root of their opinions on the subject matter. I had

never led an improvisation this deep before so I started to read about how others had approached it. Liz Gennaro gave a great overview on Louie Horst's thoughts on introspective movement:

Influenced by Freudian psychology and the study of the subconscious, Horst developed the method, Introspection-Expression as a technique for discovering movement. Using Freudian analysis as his map, Horst devised a system for the choreographer to examine inner feelings, to delve into personal interior landscapes and discover 'inward-turning', 'in-pointing' movement. Just as a psychoanalyst leads a patient back to childhood in order to discover suppressed feelings, Horst developed the method of Introspection-Expression to guide the choreographer in developing movement which originated from an essential, personal emotion. This 'inward-turning' abounds in the work of Martha Graham, and is one of the principle defining physical characteristics of the early American modern dance canon. (2)

Thinking about the improvisation from a psychoanalytical side made sense to me. For my purposes I was not going to go so deep to dig up childhood memories, because I wanted to know how these grown women currently felt about isolation and solitude. I did know, however, that some of the dancers would go all the way and bring up unwanted memories, so I had to be prepared to pull them out of it. It was an exploration both for the dancers and for me because you never know what will happen in the "unconscious." Horst, in his book *Dance Forms: In relation to Other Modern Arts*, explains in his own words how "The paradoxical (or seemingly irrational) world of the 'unconscious' is now an accepted area for exploration in which literature, painting, drama and also dance find their comments and plots" (Horst 91). He was referring to the early American modern dance, but his interpretation is still applicable today. I believe that there is an element to all art that is unconscious. *Expressionism in Art* by Sheldon Cheney

explains, “Art is made a funnel for belching up from the subconscious” (Horst 98). Early modern dance started to make a shift from formalism to expressionism, and I also wanted to explore the line between these two.

After this shift into expressionist, Bob Fosse was still creating work in the jazz world. Though modern dancers at the time might have thought his work was too showy to be expressionist, every step he taught had an intention behind it:

[Fosse would] say things like, ‘Now feel like a fat girl doing that step,’ or ‘This pose has the same feeling as the Petty-girl poses in the famous calendar.’ Every step had a thought behind it. I feel this is one of the reasons why Fosse’s dances were always so mesmerizing to watch: dancers weren’t just doing movements, they had a whole life going on underneath the choreography. They were always thinking something, not just moving around like robots. (Beddow 9)

Originally, I started my process with improvisations to hear the dancers’ opinions. In the end, I appreciated that initial process even more because it created a thought behind the dancers’ movement instead of them just mindlessly moving. At the same time that the dancers were informing me of their opinions, they were also clarifying them for themselves. I believe that because they were able to move while hearing quotes from Elizabeth Cady Stanton, they were able to be open to feel an organic initial reaction to what they were hearing. From there, through movement or writing, they were able to work through the initial emotion with reasoning to figure out why they felt the way they did. Because they started the process with a deep intellectual understanding of their opinions, the dancers were able to connect on a human level to their movement and to each other in the final performance.

Entertainment versus Art

There has always been a separation between what is considered entertainment and what is considered high art. Each group has their elitist view of what they consider “shallow” and what they consider “self-indulgent.” I believe that the two can work together to create a piece of art that the common public can also consider entertaining. Louie Horst explains a shift from art for entertainment and art for self-indulgence and perhaps why they might seem mutually exclusive:

[In the nineteenth century] all the arts, but especially dancing, were expected to express happiness and joy, or a romantic sort of sorrow. It was ‘bad taste’ to show one’s inner feelings, and certain intimately personal emotional subjects ‘were not material for art.’ Art restricted in these ways was of necessity superficial, i.e., concerned with appearances. The present-day artist, impatient with shallowness, adventures into any realm which has to do with human beings and uses anything he discerns there as material for his aesthetic form. (91)

He goes on to explain that during the original shift, “introspective topics and movements were thought to be very ugly and completely inappropriate for art.” He also states that it is still “dangerous material because it can easily lead to the sterility of self-expressionism” (Horst 98). Throughout history, dance has only evolved because dancers rebel against their teachers. In this case, modernists were rebelling against the shallow themes they saw in art, so at the time there was obviously no one who would try to use both at the same time. Sally Banes explains more of the feminist reasoning behind the separation:

[Modern dance] was an arena in which women could and did play leading roles (in contrast to other art forms, including ballet, where men dominated both practice and

pedagogy). On the other hand, these artists saw modern dance as a domain for “high art” innovation, as opposed to dance as popular entertainment. The latter was seen by these choreographers (and also by critics and audiences) as cheap and lower-class. (124)

Early modern dance in America allowed women to be seen for their minds and choreography instead of for just their bodies in popular entertainment. This causes a separation because the women in popular entertainment are making more money, but the women in modern dance have a greater expressive outlet and sense of self.

Martha Graham, though she was an early modern pioneer, stuck to her more formalist roots. Marko Franko in his book, *Dancing Modernism/Performing Politics* explains:

But for Graham, formalism is a way around the limitations of sexist emotivism, the cornerstone of 'expressional' dance. This is to say, without a certain formalism, Graham could not attain the requisite subjectivity because her work would be dismissed as self-indulgent. (44)

Formalism was her way of making high art created by a woman acceptable. Though I would consider her dances expressive, they contained the right amount of formalism to be taken seriously. According to Franko's statement above, women were already seen as emotional beings so if they created exclusively expressionist works, the art would seem self-indulgent and perhaps unrelatable to men in the audience. Graham created formalism by codifying her specific technique, which was derived from and in reaction to ballet. Through the use of this technique on stage, Graham was able to add another element to expressionism in order for her work to be considered high art. There is a certain amount of objectivity that comes into play with formalism; one can say a dance was good or bad based on formalism of technique quite easily. If the dancer

did not straighten her leg or point her toe or contract with breath it was considered bad and if she did, it was considered good. Expressionism was tricky because it was, and still is, very subjective to say if a dancer was able to emote well enough or not. Combining the two created a solidified system of response as well as opened up an opportunity for a more artistic response to the piece the audience was watching. I felt the need to use formalism in my concert in order to show off the capabilities of the female body. I wanted to show that a woman's body can be so much more than a sex symbol. She can kick and jump and twirl on stage for twenty minutes straight while telling a story at the same time. If the audience received nothing else from my show, I wanted them to be impressed by the strength of the women on stage.

At the same time, I wanted the audience to walk away with more than that. I believed that the dancer population of the audience would take more from my piece because they would understand the meaning of gestures, phrasing, and spacing from taking dance composition classes. But I wanted every single person to walk out of that theater happy and excited about dance. I believe there is a way to add elements of popular entertainment into art to create a response from the general audience members or to at least engage them. If an audience member sees a familiar symbol, like a mask, or hears a recognizable song, they automatically become interested. Once they are hooked, they are more likely to stay engaged because they feel as though they were invited in. Horst explains this in terms of all art forms: "All kinds of modern artists have used jazz in their serious work. It has a quality of unpretentious directness which arises from its closeness to people's feelings and instinctive ways of expressing themselves" (112). Sometimes I watch dance pieces that are so complex that even I, as a dancer, lose interest because I feel that the piece is over my head. I do not think that is always a bad thing but personally, I wanted to make a piece that was accessible to everybody watching. People

understand elements from popular culture, so if there are other abstract elements in the art they are observing, audience members do not feel like they are in over their heads.

It was important for me to include the audience members' reaction in my creation process for two reasons; the first one being my background in and inspiration from jazz dance. What the audience saw on the Broadway stage was crucial to the narrative story being conveyed. I really took that into consideration when I was creating the blocking for the piece. Important transitions between dancers either happened where everyone could see them or when no one else was on stage. Though I did not have an overly specific narrative, there was still a story line throughout. The audience response was also important to me because one of my goals as a choreographer is to make dance accessible to everyone. I have such a passion for movement and I want to be able to share that passion with as many people as I can. I felt the need to make a piece that not only spoke to my own life and experiences but one that would also speak to everyone watching as well.

The Fall of Fearing

"We all have to be independent to make it through this life in one piece."

The piece begins with sound only. The curtains are closed and all the audience hears is the lyrics sung by Florence and the Machine: "Regrets collect like old friends, here relive our darkest moments. I can see no way, I can see no way and all of the ghouls come out to play." The lyrics to me are a sort of an introduction and also foreshadow what will happen tonight during the piece. Though the mood is up at this point with the energy and excitement of starting the show, the lyrics suggest that the mood is soon to change. As she sings that last lyric, the curtains begin to open on a dimly lit red space with the dancers already moving, spread out covering the

stage. This opening was chosen to illustrate to the onlooker that the piece has already begun without them. It could have been going on for the fifteen seconds since the music started or for the whole twenty minutes since the audience started to enter the theater. This was chosen to show that the piece could be a never-ending cycle that happens in each of our lives. Each dancer is seen as an individual but also an equal. Though everyone is moving in a way that makes sense to them and wearing something different, they are all blending together in a beautiful color scheme amongst a mass of joyously moving bodies. The lights pop to white, contrasting Florence as she sings, “It’s always darkest before the dawn,” while finally exposing each dancer’s face of pure happiness. This is not only meant to foreshadow how the evening will end but to create a flashy beginning to grab the audience’s attention. Part of the reasoning behind the lighting choice was from my influence of jazz and Bob Fosse. Margery Beddow in her book, *Bob Fosse’s Broadway*, says that “Fosse was aware of how important lighting was in moving the focus where he wanted” (2). With this opening piece coming from the entertainment side of my influences, what the audience would see and feel was an important factor when designing it.

From this pop of bright light the dancers split and exit the stage, leaving five dancers behind. At this point no one knew it yet, but the lyrics are not the only foreshadowing of what is about to happen. Each section of this opening was taken from later in the show and compiled together. I wanted this piece to be an introduction and to subconsciously prepare the audience for what they will see and what they might experience during the piece. As the dancers begin their choreography, they sometimes are on their own timing and at other times they link up with another dancer. The lights change color every few seconds and, like the dancers, the change sometimes links to the music or movement but shifts on its own timing as well. This timing on the dancers’ side came from the fact that I took a movement phrase from later in the show and put it

to a song at a completely different tempo. Instead of setting it, I let the dancers do it until they sunk into their own timing. In hindsight, the main purpose of the chance timing was to show that everyone and everything has a beautiful individual voice so when you add them all together, you can acquire something otherwise unobtainable by the individual. But this blend of voices also would not be as special without the individual in it. This idea is similar to opera composer Richard Wagner's idea of *gesamtkunstwerk*, translated from German to mean total work of art. A complete and total work of art would not be the same without each composite piece being present.

On the next music cue, "I'm always dragging that horse around...tonight I'm gonna bury that horse in the ground," some of the dancers run off to allow more to come on. The lyric meant to me that even though in this piece I will see a low point of some of these human beings dancing around me, I will also experience the strength they have to offer. The section continues as the dancers pass along a movement phrase in one count cannon down the line, showing off the individuals while they are building to dance in unison. This small motif illustrates the idea behind the whole concert. As humans we are encouraged to show our individuality and independence, but the real challenge is when we must show ourselves in a group of people. In the best interest of the group, whatever group it may be, we all need to bring ourselves as the best individuals we can be. We can either be stifled by the fear of what others think or allow the people around us to help us grow. As this motif transitions to the next; the dancers are choosing to offer help as well as receive it. Every dancer is highlighted while they move in a clump on the downstage diagonal, but they are all working towards the good of the group by pushing forward and spreading their happiness to each other while also reaching their energy out to the audience.

This choice once again was illustrated to me through the lyrics: “And it’s hard to dance with the devil on your back so shake him off.”

The next section focuses on the main characters and their relationships. Solos, duets, and trios from throughout the concert are overlapped at this point so that the audience does not know exactly what they are seeing, but it is meant for them to start subconsciously linking certain people together¹. The characters for this piece were made from the journal entries I received from the dancers, so essentially each dancer is playing herself. But I found some interesting connections between what people were saying and created relationships in the show based off of that. I will explain the details of these relationships as they become relevant.



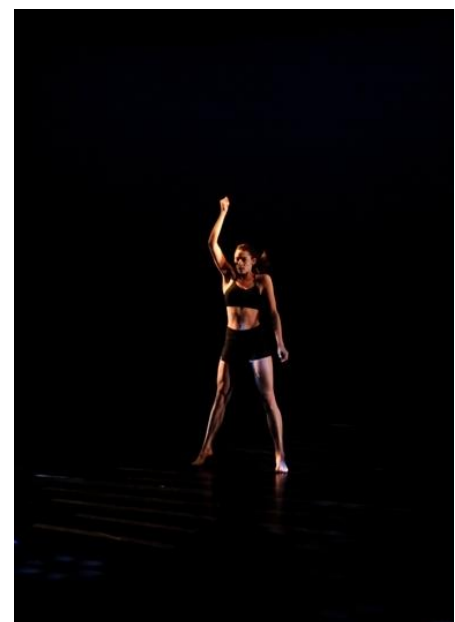
The last section of the opening ends with the group of thirteen dancers moving in unison to the chorus, “shake it out, shake it out,” representing the group or the whole. Each dancer is seen through the staging and lighting but is also a part of the group, choosing to be there while being herself. The dancers start to drift off stage at their own pace. Three dancers are left upstage and I am downstage center. As the three in back are rejoicing in their movement, I lose sight of this happiness and become distracted by a mask on the floor. I stand as far downstage center as I can as I tie on this mask, blatantly blocking myself from the audience sitting right in front of me. As I do this the women return to the stage. This time they wear no facial expressions and are dressed in black bras and black shorts. As the trio in the back starts to walk

forward, I exit the stage wearing my mask. The women in front set up the chairs for their next performance.

“But every day I have to put on a show.”

“I used to say it. Everybody does. One time I was going to do a film, a semi documentary, about how everyone has to put on a show, how everybody wakes up and says, ‘It’s Showtime!’” (Grubb xxviii) That was Bob Fosse’s response to being asked if he really woke up every morning and said, “It’s Showtime, Folks!” The next section of the evening not only explores Fosse’s movement style but this concept as well. The three dancers who have not given into “the performance,” Keely Ahrold, Margaret Behm and Millie Heckler, begin the section by becoming part of the audience. They sit in the chairs the rest of the dancers just set out for them. They observe “the performance” from an outsider’s perspective. This set up was inspired by Fosse’s use of depth from his camera angles in his movies. The real audience must now watch the dance with a row of chairs and people in front of them.

As the music begins a lone dancer, Lauren Vickerman, is left upstage center. She begins her solo, which involves large expressive movements shown off by her long, slender limbs. Though her movement is expressive, her face shows no sign of emotion. Even as she approaches the audience in a head on stare, there is nothing. This was very characteristic of the Fosse style as he was known to coach his dancers to have no facial expressions (Beddow, 44). The music starts to build and, one by one,



parts of the dancers begin to emerge from the wings. They are bringing attention to their parts and limbs to distract from the fact that they are human. The dancers are putting on a performance for entertainment and do not want to bother the audience by sharing their human problems. That is also why they are dressed in their bras and shorts; they want to draw attention to their bodies and movement so that people will not even be concerned about what their face is doing. They are afraid to open themselves up to an audience of strangers and even to the dancers around them, and this is where I come back. As I return to the stage wearing a black cardigan over my bra and shorts, I am carrying another mask meant for Vickerman. I now represent fear and am coming in to “help” the dancers by blocking them from the onlookers by covering the women up with masks.

The Masks

The masks are the literal representation of the walls we put up when we try to be someone we are not. When we act a certain way to please someone else, we slowly start to lose our way until we can't recognize ourselves anymore. This is explained very eloquently by Jim Morrison, lead singer of The Doors:

Most people love you for who you pretend to be...to keep their love, you keep pretending – performing. You get to love your pretense...it's true, we're locked in an image, an act. And, the sad thing is, people get so used to their image – they grow attached to their masks. They love their chains. They forget all about who they really are. And, if you try to remind them, they hate you for it. They feel like you're trying to steal their most precious possession.

The mask was an easy decision for me; I knew that I needed to physicalize the idea of putting up a wall and masks were the way to do it. In a way we, as a human race, enable each other to hide behind our masks. When we see people hiding, we let them stay there. There are only a few people, represented by Ahrold, Behm and Heckler, who will be able to see the true soul within and demand more.



Bob Fosse used the tactic of blank expressions to show emotional disconnect, but other Broadway and modern choreographers used this idea of masks: “The dance [*Witch Dance* by Mary Wigman] is rife with slow deliberate movement, sudden charged outbursts, distorted limbs and is performed in a mask depicting an impassive expression. The impassive expression is also employed in de Mille’s ‘Postcard Girls’, and is significant in the early work of Martha Graham” (Gennaro). The use of masks on women is an interesting dilemma. The mask can take away from the so-called “sexist emotivism”, by author Mark Franko, in order to give the woman power (44). That is to say, women are already too emotionally driven so by covering up their faces they are given power. But at the same time it draws the attention downward, objectifying the

woman's body. In the case of this section of my piece, the women do not want to be characterized by their emotion or their body but they are there to put on a show because they are too afraid to really look at their soul.

As I tie the first mask on to Vickerman, more dancers with their masks already on enter the space. The dancers continue to perform outward with frontal formations and movement while I come around tying masks on the remaining dancers. The dancers do not acknowledge me at this point because they are using the fear and the masks to feel safe, but they are not aware they are doing it. As they are hinting at the original women on Broadway, this fake performance is all they know and do not realize they are being driven by fear. They split to do their own version of a movement phrase and then following behind fear, they come back to unison for their small finale. At this point the attention is drawn to a lone dancer who is no longer wearing her black attire.

"I forget how to be me"

This soloist, Samantha Lysaght, has a very different movement style from the rest of the characters on stage. Instead of the tension being contained inside of the small details of the movement, she is allowing the tension to pull until it releases out through her limbs in a controlled explosion of movement. As the rest of the dancers exit on high relevé or leading from their toes while pushing the pelvis forward, Lysaght remains grounded through her legs and pelvis. The dancers have taken all the chairs except for two, representing that "the performance" is over but there is still the feeling of being watched. This is why two dancers remain in the chairs and observe. Lysaght's solo, which is contained to the middle part of the stage by a pool of light, represents the feeling of isolation that fear creates. She is starting to realize that fear no

longer makes her feel safe but it actually makes her feel alone, even though there are still people on stage with her. Fear has isolated her physically but more so mentally; she can feel the solitude even when she is within a group of people. In her journal Lysaght talks about how she sometimes changes what she says to people based on what she thinks they want to hear. This led her to feel lost and homesick and all she wanted was another soul to lean on that could understand her. In this solo, she is searching for someone else but no one is there. The dancers in the chairs are still held back by their own fear and do not try to help her. Her solo ends with the two women picking up their chairs to leave as Lysaght is left on the ground.

“Because I never truly open up to anyone.”

Two dancers see this isolation and are willing to step up and offer their support. Keely Ahrold and Margaret Behm enter on the upstage diagonals and as they do so, Lysaght begins to pull herself off the ground. Both Ahrold and Behm expressed an openness to dance with others and a desire to be around people in their journals. They felt that being around people was necessary for their souls to thrive. As they make their way towards Lysaght, they are interrupted by masked dancer Allison Brown running from and then back towards fear.

Personification of Fear

As I read and re-read the dancers' journals, I realized that the common thread was fear – fear of what others think and either fear of being alone or fear of being around people. I tried to express this just through the dancers' movement but the feeling of fear was not coming off strong enough. Fear can be so controlling and it can take over your life if you let it. I needed something else to represent fear and I remembered that I did not yet have a role in the concert. I was not a part of the improvisation workshops

because I already knew my feelings on the subject matter and also because I had to facilitate. Due to this, I was not yet in the show but I wanted to be. It became a clear choice that I was to be fear in the show.

Thankfully, this decision to personify fear came early on in the process and I was able to continue forward with this in mind. I costumed myself in bra and shorts to show vulnerability in being afraid. If you are controlled by fear, you are open to be hurt because you are allowing an outside force to make decisions for you. I also wore a cardigan and mask to add a mystical element to the show. In actuality, fear is not a character or a person, it is an emotion, so personifying fear as a human antagonist was based less in reality and the costume was chosen to support that.

As I added myself in more and more, I would place myself in the back to show that I was watching over the women in masks. I learned the choreography they did to show that I was controlling the dancers. In performance, I kept a close eye on them to show that I had a strong hold on the dancers. Even though I was controlling them, the masked dancers could also still move on their own. Throughout the evening, the dancers slowly slipped away from me so they could move on their own to show that they were still able to think for themselves.

Just when Brown and Lysaght start to open up a little and lean onto Ahrold and Behm they become scared again. Millie Heckler enters as the final part of the trio and the confrontation is too much for Brown and Lysaght; they exit upstage left where fear disappeared a few moments earlier. Heckler, in the improvisation workshops and in rehearsals, was very open to others and had a great desire to create a community. Brown and Lysaght re-enter with a new dancer,

Elizabeth Hausmann. Heckler sees her and is able to confront Hausmann.

Though she has not been on stage the whole time, she has an easier time accepting what Heckler is trying to tell her. Hausmann, even if she was a little resistant at first, would not show it. She



would do anything I asked of her so when I told her to open up to the dancers around her she did. In the piece she agrees to open up to Heckler because she is learning to trust that nothing bad is going to happen. At the same time, Brown and Lysaght start to realize that they can also trust the people closest to them and turn to Behm and Ahrold instead of following fear again. All six dancers on stage have turned to community instead of fear, so I run off stage to find the others who are still afraid. The remaining masked dancers, Brown, Hausmann, and Lysaght, are able to take their masks off with the help of the trio and are freed from the control of fear.

“Each soul must depend wholly on itself.”

Allison Brown’s opening solo suggests that one may also be happy and open even in



solitude. She knows that she has souls in which she can trust, but is independent enough to be on her own as well. During her solo, other unmasked dancers slowly start coming out from the wings to dance with Brown. They are all supporting each other because if each of them were not there, the choreography would not speak the same. Each dancers contribution to the choreography was essential; the individual is just as important as the group in

this scene. The mood changes when four masked women return to the stage. They jump in with the four dancers already onstage and try to be a part of their community. The one count cannon, from the beginning of the evening, is repeated as the individuals are trying to build up to a community; this is interrupted as fear returns to the stage. The masked women are reminded that I am still controlling them and they give into fear once again. The others try to remind them of the community around them but fear has too strong of a hold on them at this point.

Six dancers, the only ones left still wearing their masks, assemble in the upstage right corner around fear. They begin to move on the diagonal in a scene somewhat reminiscent of Bob Fosse's *Big Spender*: "When they move from the lineup into a clump stage left they move as one, like an amoeba. Once regrouped, they begin a throbbing, undulating cross to stage right in which each woman, moving independently, becomes a component of the unified mass" (Gennaro 5). The women are showing their individuality, but at this point, it is being stifled by the group as a whole. Once they break from the clump, the dancers begin to circle fear. This is a moment where they can see what fear is doing to them. Once they see how powerless they are over their own actions, they start to call on each other to build themselves a community. The masked dancers break apart and spread across the stage. They have moments of unison but the individual is still seen through personal breaks of the choreography. Despite fear's best efforts to keep control in the back, this pivotal unison section starts to push the people out from behind their masks. Eventually, the six dancers walk forward in unison as the rest of the dancers



trickle on to show their love and support. Most of the dancers are tired of being controlled and allow this community around them to help them remove their masks. As this is happening, fear is stumbling forward as it is being broken down. It continues to lose power until it sees Brown try to embrace two masked dancers, Cassandra Block and Bonnie Margolin, but they are not ready to open up. Fear regains strength and chases them off stage as the rest of the dancers are left to rejoice in their community.



This joyful unison phrase was originally done with every dancer facing front to showcase their oneness. Since I wanted to move further from the presentational as this point, I changed the facings of some dancers. This created moments with people facing each other to show trust, home, and comfort. It also exposed a real emotion as people would catch eyes and smile at each other. Each dancer was seen in the phrase as they were seeing each other and working together as a group. At some point in everybody's journal they expressed the ability to open up to someone in the room or in their life and they all expressed the joy and comfort that came from that moment. This moment is once again interrupted as fear returns with the still masked Block and Margolin. Fear watches calmly in the back as the dancers execute sharp and syncopated

movements. Behind fear, however, is the trio that has remained intact this whole time. The duo in front finally gives up and ends on the floor with the music. Just when fear thinks it has won, it notices the trio is still willing to be there. As they come forward fear is pushed to the back, though still present for the two women on the floor.

“Why does fear hold possession of my moments, my feelings, and my memories?”

Block and Margolin both expressed comfort in being alone because they did not want to open up to other people. In their journals, they could not recall a time when they were truly open to one person. This makes sense because like Stanton suggests, you never share every single thought you have ever had with one person; but being able to let your guard down, even for a minute or two, can be so freeing. Everyone else has felt this except for two dancers left with masks, so the trio begins to try as hard as they can to pull them off the ground and allow them to be free. This is their final effort; there are only so many times you can show up for a person who will not show up for you. Just as tenacious as the trio in this section, fear is giving its last push to regain control. I chose to give myself the exact choreography that Block and Margolin do to show that I still have some power. I over exaggerated the effort involved in the choreography because fear was trying its hardest to keep control but almost all the dancers have been able to move on and think for themselves. At this point, the three of us are the only ones still wearing our masks.

This section ends with a choice. As the trio reaches to embrace Block and Margolin, they once again pull away to submit to fear. But this time as they approach it, they hesitate. There is a stare down between fear and the two women for a moment and in the end they chose to trust instead of hide.

“Every person in my life has impacted me, made me who I am but I can still be myself.”

The duo is still a bit hesitant to take off their masks but they know that they do not want to live in fear anymore: “How fickle my heart and how woozy me eyes. I struggle to find any truth in your lies. And now my heart stumbles on things I don’t know. My weakness I fear I must finally show.” The words of Marcus Mumford from Mumford & Son’s show the dancers’ resistance but also their willingness to push past it. The final two end up revealing themselves with the help and support of Ahrold. The rest of the dancers stand beside the two of them and lovingly pass their masks off stage. Everyone knew how hard it was to get rid of their masks so they are very gentle with Block’s and Margolin’s, though they eventually carry them away. The two of them, and everyone on stage at this point, chose to “awake their souls” in order to become more confident in themselves and connect to the people around them. Everyone has something special to offer and they can only do so if they are being one hundred percent of who they are. A moment of unison commences after the two masks have left the stage. I chose more subtle and sustained choreography to follow the rubato voice of Marcus Mumford and also to show the joy each simple moment can bring.

Fear returns to the stage for the last time. I went back and forth about having fear come into the finale or not but then I found this quote from Keely Ahrold: “Maybe fear is just inspiration in a black cape.” It is important to accept fear, because it may be there for a reason, but it also may be totally made up. The actual definition of fear is a distressing emotion aroused by impending danger, evil, pain, etc. Given this definition, fear in the sense of this piece is not real. There was no immediate danger or pain; the only danger was totally made up by the dancers in the piece. What they actually might have been feeling was anxiety, but it was not fear. This led me to my decision to have fear come back and go through a transformation as

well. As Ahrold helps to take my mask off, the dancers line up next to her to pass the final mask off stage, getting rid of fear for good. Dancer by dancer, we start to move forward building onto a movement phrase until we are all in unison.

We immediately break the unison to walk around the stage and just see each other. I wanted to show the real emotion, whatever it was, that each dancer was feeling and the easiest way to show that is to look a friend in the eye. Occasionally a dancer or two or three would start a movement phrase that was important to their character along the way. This was to show that everyone in the group had a voice. Whether a person had a solo or was in the back hugging a friend it did not matter, both were equally important. The final choreography done in unison creates community, love, trust, and compassion. Each soul can be seen as an individual and part of a group. Human beings might not share every thought they ever had but in this moment each dancer was sharing everything she had. The piece



concludes with an improvisation section to create individualism that would not be as powerful with each individual voice speaking as loud as it could. The final frontal formation shows the inclusion of the audience in this community, having been onlookers the whole time.

Conclusion

My overall intent for this piece was to seamlessly combine art for entertainment and art for self-indulgence in order to express a relatable story. I wanted to use all of my dance and

feminism influences, even if they did conflict, to make a show that displayed what I have learned and experienced in the past four years in college. Finally, I wanted to showcase each dancer not only her abilities, but her spirit. I wanted to show the subtleties and the strengths each woman had to offer. If only for myself and my dancers, I would say that I succeeded in doing all of this.

This whole process was an exploration for me and for my dancers. I learned a lot along the way and offer the success of the final performance to the trusting community we were able to build in rehearsals. Beginning the process with movement meditation improvisations allowed the dancers an opportunity to be themselves when they danced; an opportunity many dancers and students do not often receive. In being themselves they were able to connect to each other on a basic human level, which in rehearsal and onstage was so refreshing for me to see. The process seemed to mirror the product and I was very grateful for the audience to experience that with us.

In the end, I was able to finally flesh out my original mixed emotions about *Solitude of Self*. Independence and community are equally important. The community at large would not be the same without each individual that is a part of it. One must be the best individual they can be in order to aid in the growth of the community. Fear may seem like the safest option but *The Fall of Fearing* creates freedom, love, and community.

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